

DISLOCATION or SUBLUXATION



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Dislocation is injury to a joint so that adjoining bones are no longer aligned properly. Subluxation is a minor dislocation. Joint surfaces still touch, but not in normal relation to each other. Involved are the bones in joints, especially the jaw, shoulder, knee and spine. Some infants are born with a hip dislocation.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sudden joint pain, swelling or deformity after an injury.
- Limited or absent movement around a joint.

CAUSES

- Injury that stretches or tears ligaments that surround a joint and hold the bones together.
- Shallow or abnormally formed joint surfaces (congenital).
- Rheumatoid arthritis or other diseases of ligaments and tissue around a joint.
- In small children, jerking of an arm or a leg by an adult.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Rheumatoid arthritis.
- Family history of congenital hip dislocation.
- Repeated injury to a joint.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- If you are involved in heavy work or strenuous sports, learn to protect the involved joints. Use protective devices, such as wrapped elastic bandages, tape wraps, knee or shoulder pads, and special support stockings.
- Infants should be examined for congenital hip dislocation at birth and at well-baby checkups.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable with prompt treatment. After the dislocation has been corrected, the joint may require immobilization with a cast or sling for 2 to 8 weeks.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Damage to nearby nerves or major blood vessels, causing numbness, coldness and paleness.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

Immediately after injury:

- Apply ice packs to the involved joint to prevent swelling.
- A medically untrained person should not attempt to manipulate the joint back into position.
- Use a splint or sling to prevent movement while transporting the injured person to the doctor.
- Diagnostic tests may include X-rays of the joint and adjacent bones.
- Treatment may include manipulating the joint to reposition the bones.
- Surgery to restore the joint to its normal position (sometimes).
- After manipulation or surgery, the joint is usually immobilized with a splint or a cast to allow it to heal without disturbance.
- Recurring dislocation may require surgical reconstruction or replacement of the joint.

MEDICATIONS

- General anesthesia or muscle relaxants to make joint manipulation possible.
- Acetaminophen or aspirin to relieve moderate pain.
- Narcotic pain relievers for severe pain.

ACTIVITY

Resume your normal activities gradually after treatment.

DIET

Drink only water before manipulation or surgery to correct the dislocation. Solid food makes general anesthesia more hazardous.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You have difficulty moving a joint after injury.
- Any extremity becomes numb, pale or cold after injury. This is an emergency!
- Dislocations occur repeatedly that you can “pop” back into normal position.